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States' Programs for Pump Labeling of Gasoline Ingredients

Summary Statement of
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Before the
Subcommittee on Energy and Power
Committee on Energy and Commerce
House of Representatives

GA1.5/2:

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee:

We are pleased to be here today to participate in hearings aimed at determining whether it would be beneficial to have a federal uniform gasoline ingredient pump label. My statement focuses solely on the results of a questionnaire that we sent to the 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and 4 U.S. territories (56 entities hereafter referred to as states) concerning disclosure of gasoline ingredients on pump labels at retail service stations. We prepared our questionnaire in response to the Chairman's request that we contact the states to obtain information about their pump labeling requirements and their opinions on the possible need for a federal uniform pump label. We received 50 responses.

Thirty-nine of the states responding to our questionnaire have requirements for retail gasoline stations to place a label on their gasoline pumps disclosing gasoline ingredients. The bases for the majority of the states' pump labeling requirements are state laws. In all 39 states these requirements are primarily concerned with the disclosure of the content of alcohol fuels, such as ethanol and methanol, in gasoline on pump labels. The alcohol labeling requirements were established primarily for consumer protection. Half of these states specifically indicated that alcohol labeling would enable consumers to comply with automobile manufacturers' fuel specifications.

Twenty-two of the 39 states that have pump labeling programs said that no changes were needed to their programs. Nine said changes were needed, and eight others did not express an opinion.

Thirty-seven states expressed an opinion on the desirability of a federal uniform ingredient pump label. Twenty-four states favored a federal uniform label and 13 states were opposed. The other 13 states were uncertain or had no basis to judge whether a federal label was needed. The states gave various reasons for supporting or opposing a federal label; however, no consensus occurred in either group.

Twenty-eight states commented on what should be included on a federal uniform pump label, and their comments varied from very general to very specific. No consensus on what should be listed on such a label was clearly evident from the states' responses.

In summary, gasoline ingredient pump labeling varies in the states. The majority of states with labeling requirements seem satisfied with their programs. About one-half of the responding states said that they favored a federal uniform gasoline ingredient pump label. However, counting only the responses of the states with opinions, two-thirds of these states said that they favored a federal uniform pump label.